

UNCLAS HARARE 002033

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/PD, AF/S, AF/RA
NSC FOE JENDAYI FRAZER
LONDON FOR GURNEY
PARIS FOR NEARY
NAIROBI FOR PFLAUMER

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: PREL PHUM KPAO KMDR ZI

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION WSSD; HARARE

¶1. Government-owned print and broadcast media in Zimbabwe gave prominent coverage to the heckling of Secretary of State Powell at the WSSD on September 4. The story featured prominently on television and radio news programs and was page 1, above-the-fold in the government-owned Herald and Chronicle newspapers. All reporting in government media sought to portray the heckling of Powell as an additional sign of President Mugabe's popularity and strength, and the "isolation" of the United States and the UK. Excerpts follow.

¶2. Under headline "Attempt to blame Zim for Food crisis backfires: Colin Powell Booed" the government-controlled daily "The Herald" (09/05) carried the following page-1 story by political editor Munyaradzi Huni:

"U.S. Secretary of State Mr. Colin Powell's bid to blame Zimbabwe for the prevailing food crisis yesterday backfired when he was booed and jeered by delegates to the Earth Summit. All hell broke loose when Mr. Powell charged that Zimbabwe's alleged lack of respect for human rights and democracy was causing the food crisis in the country and pushing millions of people to the brink of starvation.' Mr. Powell. . .was scolded by delegates who saw the attack on Zimbabwe as an attempt to exonerate British Prime Minister Tony Blair from the humiliating dressing down by President Mugabe over Britain's interference in Zimbabwe on Monday. . . .

¶3. Zimbabwean radio and television (all government-owned) news reports on September 4 and 5 portrayed the heckling of the Secretary of State as another expression of global popular support for President Mugabe. William Nhara, a political analyst interviewed on the September 4 prime-time television news program said that President Mugabe's speech at the WSSD was comparable to Martin Luther King's "I have a Dream Speech" in terms of liberating Africans from colonialism. Nhara went on to say that, in the wake of Mugabe's speech, the U.S. and UK were isolated in their criticism of Mugabe. This comment was followed by a three-minute report on the Secretary of State's speech in which the reporter sought to make the case that the Secretary was heckled by "the growing international coalition" of President Mugabe's supporters.

¶4. The independent "Daily News" and Financial Gazette" carried a factual Reuters accounts of Powell's speech and the interruptions to it. The wire service article attributed the heckling to "environmentalists."

SULLIVAN